

Smoking and Home Oxygen Systems



“Some People Don’t Know When to Quit”

Many people with respiratory problems now use home oxygen systems. Unfortunately, some people smoke while on oxygen which can be deadly to them and to people around them.

Oxygen Helps Fire Spread Fast!

Oxygen increases the speed at which things burn once a fire starts. Home oxygen therapy increases the amount of oxygen in the environment. It will saturate clothing, fabric, hair, beards and anything in the area. Even flame-retardant clothing can burn when the oxygen content increases.

- ***Never*** smoke or light a match while using oxygen.
- Keep all flames and heat sources away from oxygen containers and oxygen systems.
- Do not allow smoking inside of a home where oxygen is used. Even if it is not being used at a particular moment, the home is still an oxygen enriched environment, and fire can get out of hand quickly.

For health care people:

Before sending a patient home on oxygen, health care providers must make sure the patient understands the dangers of smoking in an oxygen enriched environment. Smokers should be asked about their intentions. If they are unwilling to quit, the risk of fire can outweigh the benefit of oxygen therapy.

Too Many People Injured and Killed

- On October 28, 2002, a fire occurred in the home of a 56-year old Boston man, a smoker with lung disease, utilizing a home oxygen therapy system. The fire, caused by a dropped cigarette, ignited combustibles and caused an oxygen tank to rupture which accelerated the blaze. The fire claimed the life of his 8-year old daughter.
- On October 30, 2002, a 62-year old male resident in a South Shore nursing facility suffered life threatening burns to the face when he lit a cigarette while on oxygen.



FireFACTORS

**Office of the State Fire Marshal
Department of Fire Services**

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- On August 22, 2002, a 56-year old Greenfield man received 2nd and 3rd degree burns to his face, mouth, tongue and hands when he lit a cigarette while on oxygen in his home.
- On August 18, 2002, an 81-year old Boston woman on oxygen and confined to her bed, died in a fire caused when she ignited her bedding and clothes while attempting to light her cigarette.
- On August 11, 2002, a 77-year old Athol woman died in a house fire when she lit her cigarette and ignited the oxygen tubing to her home therapy equipment.
- On August 9, 2001, a 62-year old Plainville woman, on home oxygen, died when she fell asleep in a chair and dropped her cigarette, catching fire to her clothing.

People on home oxygen therapy need to plan and practice home fire escape drills

Individuals, family members and medical personnel can assist in identifying the patient's physical limitations and assess their ability to escape from the residence on their own in the event of a fire.

Make sure the home is equipped with working smoke detectors

- Have the detectors tested at least once a month.
- Change detector batteries at least once a year.
- Specialized smoke detectors are available for the hearing impaired.

Plan two escape routes from each room

- Make sure the escape path is clear and remove any obstacles.
- Arrange for special care or assistance if the patient is immobilized.

Practice the escape plan with the patient at least twice a year

Call 911 to summon help if needed

- Keep a phone by the bed or favorite chair.
- Wear a medical alert alarm.

Since 1997, 16 people have died and 20 other individuals have suffered severe burns or smoke inhalation in fires involving people who were smoking while using home oxygen systems.

Please don't become another grim statistic, keep open flames and smoking materials away from oxygen therapy equipment.